

## TOPIC 1

### Creating a Safe Space for Inquiry Through Practical Teaching

James 3:2

We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect.

We have all been hurt, even crushed by other people's words.

To some extent, we have all been influenced by the words spoken to us, the words spoken at us, the words spoken over us, and the words spoken about us.

We are often quick to recognize how others' words impact us but slow to take responsibility for our own.

Explaining does not equal repairing. When it comes to hurtful words, an explanation often makes things worse.

In those moments when we are hurt by someone's words, we don't need an explanation. We need to be glued back together; an explanation does not do that.

When we hurt someone with our words, we often instinctively retreat to the same excuse we don't want to hear from the person who hurt us – intent. We immediately claim, "I didn't mean it that way," "It didn't come out right," or "It wasn't my intent to hurt you."

These statements communicate blame!

In those moments when we begin to explain our intent, our goal is not to blame. We're simply providing an explanation, but it can come across as blaming. We're aware of this because we've been on the receiving end.

When we combine an explanation with our apology, the other person may feel blamed and pressured, as if we expect them to feel better now.

The implication is, "Why aren't you fine now?" I expect you to be fine now that I've explained. "Why aren't we fine now?" "Why aren't we back to where we were before I said what I said?"

Apologies cannot reverse or erase accidental injuries to the body. If I slam your finger in a car door, my apology doesn't make the pain in your finger go away.

Apologies cannot reverse or erase hurtful words to the soul.

Apologies combined with excuses can even cause lasting harm. Excuses cannot erase injuries to the heart or the relationship.

According to James, controlling your mouth is the ultimate form of self-control. Your words have the power to harm everyone you know, especially those closest to you.

Choose your words carefully.

Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire. (James 3:5-6)

Word fires are extinguished by humility and sensitivity.

An explanation elevates me. Humility and sensitivity elevate the injured person.

What does it look like, and what does it sound like to extinguish a word fire?

The answer to that question is, "I'm so sorry..."

And here's the most important part: "."

The silence that follows the "." is uncomfortable.

But the following silence creates the space needed for inquiry, leading away from excuses and toward healing.

## Reinforcing the Boundaries and Guiding Principles

Before we begin our Circles of Hope discussion, it's important for everyone to review the following guiding principles and boundaries. These are essential for creating a safe and restorative space for those dealing with spiritual trauma.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Play the “long game” and trust God with the outcome.
- Use love to build bridges to Jesus; don't lose the relationship.
- You can love well without losing your convictions of faith.



### CIRCLE OF HOPE TOPIC

If Jesus appeared to you and said, “I am so sorry...” followed by the “.” giving you the silence needed to create space for inquiry, what inquiries would you fill that space with?